Thinking Outside the (Search) Box

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Abstract. Search is the main entry point for an ever-increasing range of information, services, communications and entertainment. During the last decade, there have been tremendous advances in the scale of search systems and the diversity of available resources. Yet the methods used to represent searchers' information needs have changed very little. Search interfaces today look much the same as they did a decade ago. Searchers type a few words into a search box, and the search engine returns a long list of results. When the results fail to satisfy the searcher's information needs, they try again and again with little support from the search engine. In this talk I describe several efforts to improve easy and effectiveness of search by: modeling searchers' interests and activities over time, representing non-content attributes of information such as time or genre, and developing interaction techniques that enable searchers to articulate their information needs more effectively.